UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARIAT

ST/SGB/Organization
Section: DPA
15 February 1996

ORGANIZATION MANUAL

A description of the functions and organization of the

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

96-03789 (E) 290296 040396

ST/SGB/Organization
Section: DPA
15 February 1996

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S BULLETIN

To: Members of the staff

Subject: DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS

1. The present bulletin describes the current functions and organization of the Department of Political Affairs.

2. Documents ST/SGB/Organization, section DDA, of 2 August 1988, which described the organization and functions of the Department for Disarmament Affairs; ST/SGB/Organization, section F/Rev.3, of 1 December 1980, which described the organization and functions of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs; ST/SGB/Organization, section I, of January 1974 and Amend.1, 2 and 3/Rev.1 of 7 August 1974, 27 January 1975 and 1 December 1980, respectively, which described the organization and functions of the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs; ST/SGB/Organization, section ORCI, of 3 October 1988, which described the organization and functions of the Office for Research and the Collection of Information, and ST/SGB/Organization, section SPQRCDT/OCN, of 24 February 1989, which described the organization and functions of the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship and the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Namibia, are hereby superseded.

Boutros BOUTROS-GHALI
Secretary-General

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Overview

The Department of Political Affairs was established in March 1992. This newly consolidated Department incorporated most, and in some cases all, of the activities of five former departments and offices dealing with political affairs and the servicing of several principal organs of the United Nations and their various subsidiary bodies. The five departments and offices were the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Department for Special Political Questions, Regional Cooperation, Decolonization and Trusteeship, the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political and General Assembly Affairs and the Office for Research and the Collection of Information. In March 1993 the General Assembly approved, by its resolution 48/231, the restructuring of the Department outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/48/9). In addition, responsibilities related to preventive diplomacy and peacemaking functions previously performed by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General were also assigned to this Department.

Mandate

The legislative authority for this programme derives from the Charter of the United Nations, the revised medium-term plan (A/47/6/Rev.1) and relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, including resolution A/47/120, and of the Security Council.

The broad objectives of the Department are as follows:

To assist the Secretary-General in the discharge of his responsibilities under the Charter relating to the maintenance and restoration of peace and security, preventive diplomacy and peace-building, including arms limitation and disarmament;

To monitor, analyse and assess political developments throughout the world;

To identify potential or actual conflicts in whose resolution the United Nations could play a useful role;

To recommend to the Secretary-General appropriate political actions in such cases and to execute the approved policy;

To provide the Secretary-General with analysis, assessment and advice on all disarmament matters and to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to the Secretariat in the field of arms limitation and disarmament;

To provide the Secretary-General with advice on requests for electoral assistance received from Member States and to coordinate the implementation of programmes established in response to such requests;

To provide the Secretary-General with briefing materials and to support him in the political aspects of his relations with Member States;

To provide secretariat services to the General Assembly, the Security Council and their various subsidiary organs.

Organizational elements and their functions

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL

Performs the functions of a head of department/office as described in the introductory section of the Manual. In addition:

Provides the Secretary-General with advice and support on all political matters;

Provides political guidance and instructions to special envoys/special representatives of the Secretary-General;

Directs and manages, on behalf of the Secretary-General, goodwill, fact-finding and other special political missions;

Undertakes, on behalf of the Secretary-General, diplomatic activities relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes;

Advises the Secretary-General on matters relating to disarmament and arms limitation;

Acts as the focal point in the Secretariat on all matters related to electoral assistance;

Represents the Department and, in the absence of the Secretary-General, chairs the meetings of the Secretary-General's Task Force on United Nations Operations.

A. Office of the Under-Secretary-General

Performs the functions of a staff office, as described in the introductory section of the Manual and, in addition:

Advises the Under-Secretary-General on departmental policies and guidelines and deals with specific policy and management issues/problems;

Prepares reports and notes on political and managerial issues for consideration by the Under-Secretary-General;

Acts as a focal point for information on all aspects of the Department's work;

Consults, negotiates and coordinates with other departments on matters of mutual concern;

Oversees the activities of the Executive Office and of the various departmental teams or working groups established under the authority of the Under-Secretary-General.

1. Executive Office

Carries out the standard functions of an executive office as described in the introductory section of the Manual.

B. Centre for Disarmament Affairs

The Centre, reporting directly to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, is responsible for the provision of advice to the Secretary-General in the discharge of his responsibilities for disarmament. It provides the requisite substantive, secretariat and administrative services to the First Committee, to the subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly concerned with disarmament matters and to the expert groups. In performing these responsibilities the Centre:

Analyses disarmament and related international security developments within and outside the United Nations system and prepares political assessments and research papers, special publications and contributions to expert panels, seminars and conferences;

Provides substantive secretariat and administrative services to the Conference on Disarmament and to the Disarmament Commission, as well as to various review conferences and other meetings of parties to multilateral disarmament agreements;

Promotes dialogue between Governments, researchers, scientists and other experts and non-governmental organizations through the organization of meetings and conferences at both the international and regional levels;

Maintains the Register of Conventional Arms;

Develops and maintains the computerized database on disarmament and security-related issues;

Administers the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa (Lomé), the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean (Lima), and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and Pacific (Kathmandu);

Promotes regional approaches to disarmament through the provision of administrative, secretariat and substantive support to the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and to the negotiations on a treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa and through participation in the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security of the multilateral track of the Middle East peace process.

C. Electoral Assistance Division

The Division is responsible for the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in the field of electoral assistance. It also advises and assists the Under-Secretary-General in his capacity as the focal point for United Nations electoral assistance activities. In performing these responsibilities the Division:

Reviews requests for electoral assistance programmes and advises on their implementation;

Coordinates and channels to the appropriate agencies requests from Member States for electoral assistance;

Coordinates and provides support to the activities of international observers;

Undertakes needs-assessment missions to determine the specific needs of a country requesting such assistance;

Establishes an institutional memory to ensure consistency in the assistance rendered to Member States organizing elections;

Develops and maintains a roster of international experts who could provide technical assistance, as well as assistance in the verification of electoral processes;

Maintains contact with regional and other intergovernmental organizations to ensure appropriate working arrangements;

Develops regional networks of electoral organizations as instruments for the coordination of activities and for the exchange of expertise at the regional level;

Prepares the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the activities of the United Nations to enhance the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections.

1. ASSISTANT SECRETARIES-GENERAL

The Under-Secretary-General, in the performance of his activities, is assisted by two assistant secretaries-general supervising work related to the General Assembly, the Security Council and six regional divisions, namely, the Africa I Division, the Africa II Division, the Americas Division, the East Asia and Pacific Division, the Europe Division and the West Asia Division.

1.1-1.6. Regional Divisions

The regional divisions are responsible for monitoring, analysing and assessing global political developments.

In the performance of their responsibilities, each Division:

Identifies potential crisis areas and provides early warning to the Secretary-General on developments and situations affecting peace and security;

Prepares for the Secretary-General and his senior officials analytical briefs and in-depth studies focused on emerging trends bearing on peace and security with advice and/or recommendations, where appropriate, for possible action by the Organization;

Prepares briefing notes, background papers and talking points for the Secretary-General's meetings with representatives of Member States and regional organizations;

Plans and participates in fact-finding, peacemaking and other missions to areas of actual or potential conflict where the Secretary-General's preventive and peacemaking efforts may be needed or are already engaged;

Provides political guidance and support to special representatives and other senior officials appointed by the Secretary-General to assist his preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping efforts;

Maintains and expands links with other United Nations offices and departments and other relevant institutes and experts;

Liaises, consults and negotiates with Member States at Headquarters or in their capitals;

Maintains and develops cooperation with the secretariats of regional organizations and arrangements through joint meetings, consultations, liaison and attendance at meetings held by them;

Maintains contacts with non-governmental organizations and academic institutions world wide and participates in seminars and academic meetings relating to the mandate of the Department;

Prepares reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

1.7. General Assembly Affairs Division

The Division is responsible for the coordination of the work relating to General Assembly meetings and the provision of secretariat services to the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies and services various open-ended and ad hoc working groups established by the Assembly. In addition, the Division follows up on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions and prepares the basic work programme for the Secretariat.

The Division consists of three components, the General Assembly Secretariat Services Branch, the General Assembly Subsidiary Organs Secretariat Services Branch and the Division for Palestinian Rights.

1.7.1. General Assembly Secretariat Services Branch

Organizes, plans and coordinates all activities related to the organization of General Assembly sessions;

Prepares and submits for issuance all documents relating to the organization and to the provisional and final agenda of the General Assembly;

Organizes, plans and coordinates services, inter alia, with the Office of Conference and Support Services of the Department of Administration and Management, for the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and the meetings of its General Committee;

Assists the President of the General Assembly on all matters relating to the conduct of the work of the Assembly, including its Main Committees and subsidiary organs;

Advises the President, Member States, other delegations and the Secretariat offices concerned on the rules of procedure and practices of the General Assembly and maintains an updated compilation of precedents;

Advises those responsible on documentation for the General Assembly and on matters relating to the official records of the Assembly;

Identifies Secretariat units responsible for the implementation of General Assembly resolutions and decisions and establishes the basic agenda for the following session;

Prepares, in consultation with substantive departments and offices concerned, the basic programme of work of the General Assembly;

Coordinates the production of General Assembly documents by the Secretariat and approves the publication of such documents;

Ensures timely and proper submission of General Assembly documents;

Maintains a reference system on subsidiary organs of the General Assembly.

1.7.2. General Assembly Subsidiary Organs Secretariat Services Branch

Provides secretariat services to meetings of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly, including the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (the Fourth Committee), the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the Trusteeship Council, as required;

Provides secretariat services to the meetings of various ad hoc working groups established by the General Assembly;

Provides assistance in the preparation of the reports of the Special Committee, as required.

1.7.3. Division for Palestinian Rights

Provides substantive services for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, its Working Group and its Bureau;

Assists the Committee in the promotion and implementation of its recommendations;

Plans, organizes and provides substantive and technical services for regional seminars, international meetings and preparatory meetings of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on the question of Palestine;

Organizes the annual commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People;

Prepares studies and publications relating to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people;

Promotes publicity for such studies and publications, in cooperation with the Department of Public Information.

1.8. Security Council Affairs Division

The Division is responsible for the provision of secretariat services for formal meetings and informal consultations of the Security Council and its subsidiary organs, as well as for the preparation of various reports requested by these bodies. In addition, it maintains liaison with the members and non-members of the Council, other departments and offices in the Secretariat, as well as with other organs and organizations of the United Nations system.

The Division consists of four components, the Security Council Secretariat Services Branch, the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Secretariat Services Branch, the Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch, and the Military Staff Committee Secretariat.

1.8.1. Security Council Secretariat Services Branch

Provides secretariat services to the work of the Council, including its formal meetings, informal consultations and working groups;

Maintains liaison with members, non-members of the Council, other departments and offices in the Secretariat, as well as with other organs and organizations of the United Nations system;

Prepares the daily summaries of the Council's activities for the Secretary-General;

Prepares the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly;

Processes and issues as Council documents the Secretary-General's reports and communications received from the Secretary-General or Member and non-member States;

Handles and periodically issues a list of correspondence and communications received from non-governmental organizations and individuals relating to matters of which the Security Council is seized, in accordance with the appendix to the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council.

1.8.2. Security Council Subsidiary Organs Secretariat Services Branch

Provides secretariat services to the subsidiary organs of the Security Council, including the sanctions committees;

Drafts reports of subsidiary organs to the Security Council, as required;

Prepares analyses and assessments of questions relating to the work of the Security Council or the subsidiary organs, as requested;

Monitors developments in the area of sanctions, including those relating to Article 50 of the Charter of the United Nations;

Maintains liaison with delegations and with other organizations of the United Nations system;

Provides contributions to other departments/offices on issues related to the work of relevant subsidiary organs of the Security Council;

Processes communications and applications received from Member and non-member States and organizations in connection with matters falling within the purview of the subsidiary organ concerned.

1.8.3. Security Council Practices and Charter Research Branch

Prepares analytical studies on the interpretation and application of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council;

Prepares the Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council;

Maintains liaison with the Office of Legal Affairs regarding publication of the Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs;

Undertakes studies, as required, on the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council for the President and members of the Council, as well as for the Secretariat.

1.8.4 Military Staff Committee Secretariat

Provides secretariat support and advice to the Military Staff Committee in the preparation and conduct of action arising from the Committee's meetings.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS